



Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council, Inc.

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— " *Strengthening our communities through opportunities and service* " —

2016 Annual Report

A Letter From the Executive Director

Dear Friends:

Change. The word can carry with it many connotations, as well create many emotions for those people who are confronted with it. Beginning in 2017, Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council (SMOC) will be facing many changes that will test our ability to be adaptive and flexible.

New national Head Start performance standards, new national Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) organizational standards, new Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) reporting standards, to name a few. These new standards will carry with them implications of additional expense and staff capacity for our agency, without additional resources to pay for them. The board and staff at SMOC will strive to meet these new requirements, yet remain true to our mission of providing assistance to those who need it most, thereby strengthening our families and communities.

The pages of this Annual Report reflect the efforts of Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council's board, staff and volunteers, as we provide opportunity, assistance and hope to those who need it the most. We thank you for your continued support of our efforts.

Neal W. Steffl
Executive Director

Positive Outcomes for Our People and Communities

Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council, Inc. (SMOC) is a private non-profit, 501(c)3 Community Action Agency. SMOC was incorporated in July 1965 to assist and serve the needs of low-income persons in Southwestern Minnesota, specifically in the counties of Nobles, Rock, Murray, and Pipestone. Although these counties receive most of our attention, SMOC does provide specific program offerings in as few as one, and in as many as fourteen counties.

The mission of SMOC is "Strengthening our communities and people through opportunities and service." To accomplish this mission, SMOC currently employs approximately 110 full and part-time staff, that deliver an array of programs over our service area. Each of these programs has stated goals and outcomes by which we measure our success. The setting of program goals and measurable outcomes is a requirement of most of our funding sources. The operations and policies guiding SMOC's actions are governed by a fifteen member Board of Directors. It is a tri-partite board comprised of one-third elected officials, one-third private sector representatives, and one third low-income or community representatives.

In addition to making a positive difference in the lives of disadvantaged citizens of Southwestern Minnesota, SMOC also contributes to the economic development of the region. Annually, SMOC makes payments of over \$6 million to contractors, vendors, partners, and agency employees. This money circulates throughout the area, thereby benefiting the entire economy of the region.

We are proud to share the following summary of outcomes we have provided in 2016.

SMOC Expenditures ~ Fiscal Year End 2016

Federal/State Programs:	Funds:	%:	Includes:
Child Care	\$1,483,552	24.7	Childcare Aware, Family U, MN Early Learning Scholarships
Community Services	\$468,772	7.8	CSBG/MEOG/Family Connect/Homemakers/United Way
Energy Programs	\$893,980	14.9	Energy Assistance Program
Head Start	\$1,726,518	28.7	CACFP (Food Programs)
Health Program	\$431,808	7.2	Family Planning
Homeless & Shelter	\$67,695	1.1	Emergency Services: EFSP/THP/FHPAP/Live Well at Home
Housing Programs	\$61,424	1.0	MHFA/Small Cities
Job Training	\$270,902	4.5	SCSEP
Transit	\$333,863	5.6	Transit
WX Projects	\$233,777	4.5	DOE/EAP WX/MN WX/Oil/Propane
Total Expenses:	\$6,005,291	100	

Community Development

- The **Energy Assistance Program (EAP)** assisted 1,445 households with their energy bills. The average grant was \$475 per household.
- Fuel and electric vendors received a total of \$705,954
- Crisis dollars helped 162 households avert fuel or electric disconnects with a total of \$49,091 in assistance.
- We assisted 33 people with employment training through our efforts in the **Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)** and paid \$178,975 in training wages. Thirty-three local non-profit worksites were assigned workers that helped to enhance their services.
- Worksite supervisors in the six county area of Cottonwood, Jackson, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, and Rock donated their time valued at \$31,298 as in-kind dollars to assist in training the enrollees of SCSEP.
- We provided emergency assistance to 13 families utilizing \$6030 of Salvation Army funds. Assistance included gasoline, bus tickets, utilities and shelter.
- We provided \$11,200 in **FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter Program** funds in supplemental financial assistance to area food shelves that were having difficulty meeting needs through local contributions. These funds supplied the equivalent of 5,488 meals to hungry men, women and children.
- We assisted 62 households (151 individuals) with services that prevented them from becoming one of the growing homeless statistics utilizing **Family Homeless Prevention Assistance Program** funds.
- We assisted 6 households (20 individuals) with reduced rental expenses which allowed them to live in quality, safe, affordable housing utilizing **Transitional Housing Program** funds.
- We provided \$49,524 to area landlords for rental assistance payments on behalf of persons experiencing homelessness or near homelessness utilizing Family Homeless Prevention Assistance, Transitional Housing, and Salvation Army, United Way, and Live Well at Home funds.
- We have weatherized 17 homes in Nobles, Rock, Pipestone, and Murray counties and spent \$174,377 on independent contractors who purchased the materials from local businesses to complete the services through the **Weatherization Program**.
- We replaced and repaired furnaces and water heaters through the Energy Assistance Program and Weatherization Program for 50 homes, totaling \$65,921.
- The **Homemakers Program** provided services to 79 clients (8536 hours) in Nobles, Rock, Pipestone, Murray, Jackson and Cottonwood counties to help elderly and or disabled individuals stay in their home.
- **Live Well at Home** provided emergency housing assistance to 6 older adult households (13 individuals) to help them to stabilize and maintain their housing allowing them to live independently and assisted two other households with home modifications.

Community Development (Continued)

- **Fulda Small Cities** grant has 8 projects in progress for \$144,184.
- **MHFA** completed 3 projects for \$65,920.

Region 8 Child Care Aware (formerly Child Care Resource and Referral)

- Region 8 Child Care Aware serves the nine counties of: Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, and Rock. We are a part of the West/Central Child Care Aware District.
- Consultation, coaching, and technical assistance is provided to 480 early childhood programs in Region 8 including: 13 Child Care Centers, 356 Family Child Care Providers, and 26 community-based Preschool Programs. Support is also given to 85 School Readiness/Pre-K or School Age Care Programs as needed.
- Legal non-licensed caregivers received health, safety, and child development information packets.
- 13 Child Care Center Directors received advocacy, training, grant, resource, policy, and support information.
- Newly licensed child care providers in Region 8 receive a resource packet including child development, business, and child care safety information.
- Community outreach opportunities were provided in each county by collaborating with partner organizations: businesses, public health, Lower Sioux Community, family services, Help Me Grow Committee, Early Childhood Initiative Coalitions, ECFE, Community Education, ECSE, and Child Care Assistance.

Parent Aware Quality Rating System

- Child Care Aware staff provided coaching, technical assistance, and guidance to preschool, family child care providers and child care centers in Region 8 involved in Parent Aware, Minnesota's Quality Rating System.
- 52 child care / preschool programs have completed the full pathway to rating in Region 8.

Early Learning Scholarships

- Early Learning Scholarships in the amount of \$891,375 were awarded to 323 children attending child care and preschool in Region 8. 43 children aged out 09/01/2016 (became age eligible for Kindergarten.)
- Due to legislative changes requiring a 3 or 4 star rating as of 7/1/2016, only 18 Parent Aware rated child care programs could receive scholarships (4%).

Prairieland Transit System ~ Nobles County Heartland Express

- Twenty routes are provided in Nobles County each week with two Nobles County Heartland Express buses.
- Each of the fourteen communities in Nobles County is served five times each week.
- 3,547 rides were provided to residents of Nobles County with the Nobles County Heartland Express buses.
- 23,949 rides were provided at a reduced fare within the City of Worthington by the Worthington Taxi Service.
- 10,903 hours of public transportation services were provided.
- 80,258 miles were driven by Nobles County Heartland Express buses and Worthington Taxi Service vehicles.
- Cross-county transportation between Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, and Rock is being provided.

Family Planning

Provided exams and health related services to 469 clients in 2016.

Operates with a budget of \$493,622 and employees 4 staff members and 6 clinicians.

Total visits of 1262, ages 13-55, 201 new clients.

- Provided services to 63 persons from communities of color
- Provided services to 201 Hispanic clients
- Provided interpretive services to 138 Limited English Proficient clients through the use of a bilingual Family Planning staff member and the Interpreter Line
- Provided services to 54 male clients
- Provided education and counseling:
 - √ At 5 Family Planning Clinic sites of Worthington, Marshall, Southwest Minnesota State University, Milan and Redwood Falls
 - √ To 391 students, middle school through college age in Marshall, Worthington, Slayton, and Westbrook
 - √ To 830 persons at Community Health Fairs, Special Community Events, and University Events

Head Start Funding for the SMOC Head Start Program is provided by the State and Federal Governments. Total funds used for education during this time period was \$1,859,160 plus \$311,906 of in-kind and non-federal share. In addition to this we received \$36,377 from the Child and Adult Food Program. The total revenue for our program, including the in-kind / nonfederal share is \$2,207,443 for the 2016 calendar year.

State Funded Early Head Start SMOC Head Start was funded for Early Head Start through the State Head Start program and we provided Home Visiting services for 24 children and families birth to 3 years of age.

Pathway II Scholarship Funded Programming 24 Head Start Children and families served in the Center program option

Federal Funded Head Start 151 Head Start children and families served in the Home Based and Center Options

We maintained full enrollment of 197 children, 151 Federal slots and 24 Minnesota Department of Education Pathway II Scholarship slots and 24 Early Head Start State Funded slots for the 2015-2016 program year, maintaining an 83.39% program wide average daily attendance. We served 228 children and families during the 2015-2016 program year. We had 35 drops during the year.

Our enrollment consisted of identification and referrals to our Local Education Agency of 35 children with concerns in development, 15 children being identified and served under an IEP this program year.

Parent Involvement Activities SMOC Head Start promotes parents as their child's first and most important teacher. Head Start parents have many opportunities to participate in educational activities in their individual service area. The following educational presentations and tours were completed during the program year for 2015-2016: Bus and Pedestrian Safety, Nutrition Nights, Mental Health presentations on Routines, Brain Development, Sibling Rivalry and general parenting, Winter Survival, Apple Orchard tours, Airport tours, Gym days, First Aid and Choking training, and participation in local Children's Fairs.

Head Start parents worked on children's goals to help prepare them for kindergarten, participated in Policy Council, attended site parent meetings, worked with a teacher and their child on home visits and volunteered in classrooms throughout the program year. Parents donated 19,423 hours to the SMOC Head Start program and their children.

Kindergarten Readiness A primary goal for Head Start is to get children ready for kindergarten. This is accomplished within our program through the following activities. Educational opportunities are individualized for children based on parent input, and using the results of developmental, social-emotional, and health screenings. Each child's teacher creates individual goals for each child, and we have program-wide goals that we strive to reach. (See graph below for 2015-2016 school year outcomes) Our evidence-based curriculum, High Scope, includes an assessment tool that is used to track the progress children are making throughout the year. This is used to assess children's progress towards kindergarten readiness. Staff members are provided with professional development opportunities that enhance their skills in creating a classroom community and building relationships with children, involving families, and for teaching the content areas. Parents are actively involved in their children's education, as this allows for greatest success, not only at the preschool level but for a lifetime. Parents are involved in weekly, bi-monthly or 3 times per year home visits that provide parent-child time which allows opportunities for parents to work on educational goals with their children.

Chart 5 Year-Old ELL vs. English

